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SUBJECT: (Optional)

Support Bulletin

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COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)			
<p>In response to your request, attached are a draft of the Editor's Note and the rewrite of the memorandum. I have made only one change. Mr. Cunningham's quote in paragraph 3 has been substituted by another quote from his paper. While I don't doubt his observation that the Support Directorate has experienced less vocal dissatisfaction than other Directorates, it might appear to others that we are tooting our horn a bit too loudly.</p> <p>I hope the note and change meet with your approval.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div>			

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Editor's Note:

This memorandum was prepared at the request of the Executive Director-Comptroller following a discussion at the ~~DO/S Staff Meeting~~ on 16 March of the Management Advisory Group (MAG) paper on the Agency's image.

In the opinion of the editors of the Support Bulletin it expresses with complete candor Management's concern and willingness to shoulder the necessary responsibility for improving communications.

We believe that the publication of this memorandum is in itself a big step toward better Agency communications between management and employee.

DD/S 71-1033
dtd 24 March 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Director-Comptroller

SUBJECT : Agency/Employee Communication

1. This is in response to your request and paragraph 11 offers some suggestions for your consideration.

2. Attached is a list of existing Support Directorate programs to encourage communications among Agency employees. We believe that Support is doing a creditable job of communicating with all its personnel; management is conscious of the team effort needed in successfully shaping ideas and solutions to problems without false standards of "need to know." As a means of expressing interest, desire and intent to communicate, senior officers are encouraged to meet and talk with employees in the employee's work space.

3. From his position which permits him to observe how communications problems surface in all our training courses, Hugh Cunningham observes that, "Our perception of the problem leads us to the conclusion that this is not a phenomenon which is unique to CIA, but rather an extension of the values and attitudes brought by younger professionals into the Agency and shared with their peer groups on the outside. I consider it probable that the Agency has experienced less overt evidence of disquiet than some of our sister agencies" (but) "this is not to imply that disquiet does not exist."

4. Webster's New International Dictionary suggests several rather lengthy definitions of communication. The one which I prefer is "to make common to both parties . . . involved, knowledge or quality conveyed." It follows then as suggested by [redacted] that successful communication depends in the first place on attitude and desire to establish mutual understanding. If either the communicator or the person being communicated with lacks the desire for mutual understanding, communications cannot be successful.

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5. Dr. Tietjen believes that the desire of employees to participate - to get a piece of the action - is an important aspect of communications in which elements of authority, responsibility, and power each play a role. While this form of communication may involve some risks, perhaps its greatest impediment is the conviction held by some senior officials that, because their own responsibilities were earned through hard work and experience, the idea of any entitlement for today's youth is a foreign one. Jack Blake observes "communications is . . . not a monologue

. . . there are times when individuals . . . endeavoring to establish a dialogue, commence to hear things they might prefer not . . . dialogue then becomes a monologue and communications cease . . ."

6. There is evidence that other groups, as distinct from youth, are also interested in improving communications. There is even the notion that some youthful officers may be better informed than more senior officers as a result of training efforts and seminars. Perhaps the senior officers' course and suggestions for senior meetings reflect such views. And certainly those attending the Midcareer Course find the interchange with officials one of the more rewarding aspects of their experience. Again, from Blake, "there may well be danger in trying to identify specific groups with whom to communicate . . . risk of losing communication with those not . . . in that specific group."

7. Concerning the need to improve communications within the Agency as a whole, we agree with Harry Fisher's conclusion that "basic communications will not be greatly improved within the Agency by the establishment of artificial gimmicks: the creation of special boards and panels, task forces, various kinds of news letters, etc. These can often help and certainly the inclusion of young people in the deliberations of many of our formal committees and boards is a good thing; but the real problem in communicating, it seems to me, rests with the posture of leadership from the top on down to the closest supervisor."

8. It seems to be a matter of skill or the lack of it in interpersonal relations that obstructs so much of what we are trying to say to our people. This is especially vital at the lower echelons. Often enough, first-line supervisors are there because of their technical abilities; many are completely inept in terms of relating on a human plane to their subordinates. This would certainly be an educative process, but perhaps Agency management has not placed enough emphasis or enough pressure on the middle echelons to make this factor in leadership of vital importance there. If people can be talked with on a regular basis by their immediate bosses as individuals, if the why as well as the what and how is explained to them as patiently and thoughtfully as a firm and understanding supervisor can do this, if they are kept busy, if they are told how their jobs fit into the overall scheme of things, and if the supervisor is as willing to listen as he is to talk, then perhaps the subject of communications as such will not be a problem at all.

9. I am convinced that we have not concentrated enough on supervisory responsibility for communications nor have we brought enough pressure to bear from the top on down to make all segments of the Agency's leadership constantly and painfully aware of this need.

10. An additional channel of communication deserves attention. When the customary methods of communication are ineffective or too cumbersome it is vital that employees be provided an alternate channel

for expressing their concerns at a relatively high organizational level outside the normal chain of command. The desirable circumstance is that there be an individual of whom it is said, "You can talk to him-he'll level with you." Such should be encouraged - by whatever means it has come about.

11. To accomplish the desired results we suggest the following:

a. Greater emphasis on the proper and continuing use of interpersonal communication between individuals as an indispensable element of good personnel management. This can be accomplished in part through wider participation in formal training courses (supervision, management, managerial grid, etc.) but it is essential that each successive level of management, by its own behavior, encourage open and creative exchanges between employees.

b. Sharpened awareness on the part of all of us in senior positions that our actions may be communicating a message quite at variance with our words.

c. Providing employees who are critical of Agency policies or practices with an opportunity to study the matter in question thoroughly and contribute constructive recommendations with the assurance that such recommendations will receive full and adequate consideration.

12. As a consequence of the review we made with all of the Support Offices in preparing these comments, we have decided that our greatest emphasis will be on attitude. With perhaps some minor refinements or occasional innovations, we believe that in mechanisms we have a full program of communication within the Directorate. To the extent that we are falling short, it is in intent supported by candid and sensitive action. I intend to share this memorandum with all of the senior officers of the Directorate.

John W. Coffey
Deputy Director
for Support